

## 4.9 Marital History & Fertility

This section details the NLSY97 data on respondents' experiences with pregnancy, children, and marriage or marriage-like relationships. Throughout the survey, a marriage-like relationship is defined as a sexual relationship in which partners of the opposite sex live together.

Table 1 overviews the *NLSY97 User's Guide* subtopics available in this section and any global universe restrictions affecting those subtopics. Users should note that certain questions or groups of questions within a subtopic may have additional restrictions. Please consult the NLSY97 questionnaire and codebook for more information on particular questions.

**4.9 Table 1. Marital History & Fertility Subtopics and Universe Restrictions**

<i>NLSY97 User's Guide</i> Subtopic	Round 1 Universe	Round 2 Universe	Round 3 Universe	Round 4 Universe
4.9.1 Fertility, Pregnancy & Children				
Pregnancies not ending in live birth	≥14 as of 12/31/96 and female	≥14 as of 12/31/97	all ages	all ages
Fertility and children	all ages	all ages	all ages	all ages
Adopted children	child reported on household roster	17 as of 12/31/97 or child on HH roster	≥17 as of 12/31/98 or child on HH roster	≥17 as of 12/31/99 or child on HH roster
4.9.2 Marital/Marriage-Like Relationships	16 as of 12/31/96	≥16 as of 12/31/97	≥16 as of 12/31/98	≥16 as of 12/31/99

### **4.9.1 Fertility, Pregnancy & Children**

This section discusses information about fertility, pregnancy, and children collected in the self-administered and fertility sections of the youth instrument. For information about sexual activity, refer to section 4.5.8, “Sexual Activity & Dating.”

In the self-administered section of the *Youth Questionnaire*, female respondents who were age 14 by the end of the year before the interview are asked a series of questions on pregnancy. Those who report having ever been pregnant are asked whether the pregnancy resulted in a child born alive. If the pregnancy did not end in a live birth, follow-up questions ask for the month and year the pregnancy ended, the number of months into the pregnancy it ended, the youth’s age at that time, and the outcome (e.g., stillbirth, miscarriage, abortion). Pregnant respondents are asked how far along they are in their pregnancy; if not sure, they are asked for the date of their last period. The rounds 2, 3, and 4 interviews also included questions for male respondents. This self-administered series asked if the youth had ever made a woman pregnant, his age at that time, if any woman was currently carrying his child, the total number of women he had ever impregnated, the total number of pregnancies, the number ending in a live birth, and the number ending in an abortion.

The fertility section of the questionnaire asks all respondents if they have given birth to or fathered any children. For each live birth, the survey records the birth date, gender, mortality status, and primary residence of the child. Female respondents are asked if they are legally responsible for their child; male respondents are asked the same question about the birth mother’s legal responsibility.

In addition, the round 1 NLSY97 survey gathered detailed information concerning legal custody and legal responsibility for each child listed by the respondent. The survey defined “custody” as the place the child was living and “responsibility” as the person who made major decisions about the child’s life. After these questions, male respondents were asked if they had ever legally acknowledged paternity by signing the birth certificate, applying for insurance, or using other methods that would establish their relationship to the child. Female respondents were asked the same type of paternity questions about the child’s father.

For each child, the survey instruments then ask for the characteristics of the child’s other biological parent at the time of conception. Data recorded include race, age, school enrollment, labor market status, welfare reciprocity, and highest grade completed. These details were expanded in round 2 with the addition of highest degree received and religious preference. In each round, the respondent is then asked about the type of relationship he or she had with the other person. The first question asks how often the couple had sex (on-going or only once/twice), while the second question asks about the parents’ relationship at the time of the birth (i.e., not seen each other for a month or more, still in contact but not sexual, still sexual relationship).

A new set of questions in round 4 addressed only male respondents who had fathered a child. First, the respondent provided current information about the mother of each child, such as her enrollment and employment status, program participation status, and income. He also stated whether he currently had a close relationship with the mother. The survey then asked about the respondent's relationship with each of his children. Respondents reported whether they participated in prenatal activities such as going with the mother to the doctor, buying things before the baby was born, and being present at the delivery. If the respondent had seen the child in the past month, he stated how often he performed activities such as bathing or dressing the child, preparing a meal for the child, or reading books to the child. Finally, male respondents provided information about child support. Respondents first reported the amount of support awarded in a child support agreement and then stated whether they had provided additional informal support, such as performing household repairs, buying clothes for the child, or buying household items or gifts for anyone in the household, in the past 12 months.

*User Notes:* Basic information about the respondent's children is collected and organized into the BIOCHILD roster. In general, this roster functions in the same way as other NLSY97 rosters, as described in section 3.2 of this guide. However, users should be aware that the loop numbers for the series of questions about new biological children do **not** correspond to the numbers on the roster. The procedure for matching questions about new children to the correct child on the BIOCHILD roster is described in the *NLSY97 Codebook Supplement*.

Questions about adopted children have been present in each survey. Information collected includes the child's birth date, gender, residence, date the child died or left the respondent's household, and whether the respondent is still the legal adoptive parent. Note that no respondents reached this series in round 1 because of an age restriction and no respondents reported having any adopted children in round 2. A few adopted children were reported by respondents in rounds 3 and 4.

*Created Variables.* The status of the respondent's biological children is identified in a created variable (CV\_CHILD\_STATUS.xx). Coding categories include put up for adoption, deceased, nonresident in foster care, nonresident not adopted or in foster care, and resident in the respondent's household. Other variables include each biological child's date of birth and, if applicable, date of death. These variables record both the actual dates (CV\_CHILD\_BIRTH/DEATH\_DATE.xx\_M/Y,) and the dates in the continuous month scheme (CV\_CHILD\_BIRTH/DEATH\_MONTH.xx) described in section 4.4, "Event History." Finally, two variables report the number of biological children ever born to the respondent who reside in the household (CV\_BIO\_CHILD\_HH) and the number who do not reside in the household (CV\_BIO\_CHILD\_NR).

**User Notes:** Users should be aware that, in some cases, problems arose in the marriage and fertility sections due to inaccuracies in relationship codes in the household roster. If a household member was identified on the roster as the respondent's child or spouse, the marriage and fertility sections asked questions about that person. If the relationship code in the roster was incorrect and the person was not a spouse or child, the youth respondent would correct the relationship at that point.

CHRR staff subsequently corrected a number of problems in the roster relationship codes. Thus, it may appear that respondents were asked marriage and fertility questions even though there was no one in the household to ask these questions about. Users may not be able to trace a child or spouse back to the roster due to these corrections. Researchers should contact NLS User Services for more details.

**Comparison to Other NLS Surveys:** Information on fertility and on the status of children has been regularly collected from the NLSY79, Children of the NLSY79 age 15 and older, and the Original Cohorts. Data include number of children, dates of birth, gender, and life status. Refer to the *NLS Handbook* or each cohort's *User's Guide* for exact survey years and the types of information available.

**Survey Instruments:** Questions on pregnancy are found in the self-administered section (YSAQ) of the *Youth Questionnaire*; questions on children are found in the fertility (YFER) section.

**Related User's Guide Section**  
4.5.8 Sexual Activity & Dating

**CD—Main Areas of Interest**  
Children  
Created Variables  
Fertility and Pregnancy

**CD—Supplemental Area of Interest**  
Sexual Activity

### 4.9.2 Marital & Marriage-Like Relationships

The surveys ask respondents age 16 or older at the end of the calendar year before the survey about their marital status at the time of the survey. In addition, information is gathered about all changes in the respondent's marital and cohabitation status that occurred between the interviews. In the NLSY97, a marriage-like relationship is defined as a sexual relationship in which partners of the opposite sex live together. In rounds 2–4, the partners must have lived together for at least one month.

**4.9.2 Table 1. Number of Respondents Married or Cohabiting**

	Cohabiting at Interview Date			Ever Married		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Round 1	3	8	11	0	3	3
Round 2	34	87	121	7	35	42
Round 3	77	185	262	29	96	125
Round 4						

**Notes:** This table is based on CV\_MARSTAT; numbers from round 4 are not yet available. The two categories in the table, cohabiting at the interview date and ever married, are not mutually exclusive. For example, a respondent might be divorced or separated but currently cohabiting with a new partner; this respondent would be represented in both categories.

Each survey asks the respondent to report the name (or initials, if the respondent is reluctant to provide a full name) of any spouse or partner meeting the above definition. The surveys then collect specific information on each partner. For all spouses and partners, the respondent reports when he or she started and stopped living with that individual. If the spouse or partner is not residing in the respondent's household, the youth is asked for additional information. This includes the partner's age, race, and highest grade of schooling at the time the relationship began; whether the partner was enrolled in school, working, or receiving government assistance when they began living together; and the partner's religious preference and the frequency with which they attended religious services (rounds 1 and 2).

After the list of spouses and partners is compiled, the questionnaires go back through the list and determine the dates at which changes in marital status occurred during each relationship. Respondents state whether they were married, divorced, reunited, separated, or had their marriage annulled at that date. Additional questions ensure that the time periods are captured if respondents break up and then live again with the same partner.

Rounds 1 and 4 also included a series that provided a detailed picture of a respondent's life with his or her current spouse/partner. Respondents were asked to rate how often they and their partner engaged in behavior such as screaming or yelling, compromising to resolve a disagreement, or expressing affection for

each other. Respondents answered once for themselves and once for each partner so that answers are provided for both sides of the relationship, although only from the respondent's point of view.

*Created Variables.* Based on questions in this section, two created variables identify the current marital status of age-eligible respondents. The first, CV\_MARSTAT\_COLLAPSED, classifies respondents in five basic marital categories—never married, married, separated, divorced, and widowed. The other, CV\_MARSTAT, uses more detailed categories to provide cohabitation information as well (e.g., never married, cohabiting; married, spouse absent; separated, cohabiting). The respondent's total number of marriages (CV\_MARRIAGES\_TTL) and total number of cohabitation experiences (CV\_COHAB\_TTL) are also created. The beginning date of the respondent's first marriage is provided in actual month and year variables (CV\_FIRST\_MARRY\_DATE\_M/Y) and as a continuous month scheme variable (CV\_FIRST\_MARRY\_MONTH). The beginning date of the respondent's first cohabitation has the same created variables available, with "COHAB" in place of "MARRY" in the title. Users should note that the created marriage date variables refer exclusively to spouses; the created cohabitation date variables refer only to partners.

In addition, the Event History CD contains a number of created variables tracing the respondent's marriage and cohabitation history over time. Unlike the created variables described above, these event history variables include both spouses and partners in the same variable. Interested researchers should refer to section 4.4, "Event History," for descriptions of these variables and of the continuous month scheme mentioned above.

**User Notes:** Users should be aware that, in some cases, problems arose in the marriage and fertility sections due to inaccuracies in relationship codes in the household roster. If a household member was identified on the roster as the respondent's child or spouse, the marriage and fertility sections asked questions about that person. If the relationship code in the roster was incorrect and the person was not a spouse or child, the youth respondent would correct the relationship at that point in the interview.

CHRR staff subsequently corrected a number of problems in the roster relationship codes. Thus, it may appear that respondents were asked marriage and fertility questions even though there was no one in the household to ask these questions about. Users may not be able to trace a child or spouse back to the roster due to these corrections. Researchers should contact NLS User Services for more details.

*Comparison to Other NLS Surveys:* Information on marital status, history, and transitions has been collected for each cohort (but only for NLSY79 Children age 15 and older). For more information, refer to the *NLS Handbook* or the appropriate cohort's *User's Guide*.

*Survey Instruments:* These questions are found in the marriage section (YMAR) of the *Youth Questionnaire*.

*Related User's Guide Sections*

4.4 Event History

4.6.5 Household Composition

4.9.1 Fertility, Pregnancy &  
Children

*CD—Main Areas of Interest*

Created Variables

Demographic Indicators

Marriage & Cohabitation

*CD—Supplemental Areas of Interest*

Children

Household Characteristics